

State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

March 2nd, 2021

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 6374, AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

I would like to thank the esteemed members of this committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6374. My name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am the State Representative for Connecticut's 18th assembly district.

I was fortunate to work as the Director of Public Policy at the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence in 2014 when Connecticut passed landmark campus sexual assault policy. Two years later, I worked with lawmakers to enact an affirmative consent standard and training on college campuses. The Connecticut General Assembly has taken a proactive role in addressing campus sexual assault, and HB 6374 is another important step toward improving campus culture and providing victims of sexual assault with the support and resources they need.

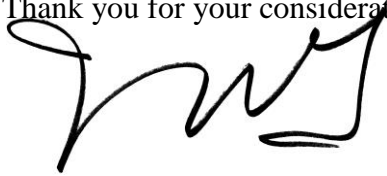
While amazing places to learn and grown, college and university campuses remain an environment where high rates of sexual violence take place. We know from research that perpetrators are more likely to use alcohol to subdue their sexual assault victims than guns, threats and fists. With a prolific drinking culture on many college campuses, it should come as no surprise that the rates of sexual assault remain high. HB 6374 includes important protections for students to feel more comfortable coming forward to report an assault should alcohol or drugs be involved. Under HB 6374, a student cannot be disciplined for violating an institution's policy related to alcohol or drugs if they are disclosing sexual assault or violence.

The 2014 and 2016 legislation emphasized the importance of student education. Campuses were encouraged to share important information with students on such things as campus policies, who to report to and how to do so, what affirmative consent is and is not as well as training on bystander intervention. HB 6374 is a much needed follow-up to that legislation in that it seeks to establish student climate surveys, to be conducted every two years. Campus climate surveys serve as a platform for students to safely and anonymously share their experiences. This is especially important given low rates of reporting among individuals who are impacted by sexual

violence. You cannot solve an issue without fully understanding it - a campus climate survey requirement in CT would equip Connecticut universities with the student insights and stories needed to inform university policy, response, protections, education and resources for those in their community.

It is important that the survey be conducted every two years to ensure that all universities routinely check-in with student climate and accessibility of resources and to ensure that all students, beyond the traditional four-year undergraduate, have the opportunity to share their insights and experiences if they wish to.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jillian Gilchrest', written in a cursive style.

Jillian Gilchrest
State Representative
West Hartford